

WEARE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 23, 2008
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In attendance were: John Ciampi, secretary, Pat Myers, Steve Najjar, Chair OSC, Andy Fulton, chair WCC, and George Malette. Guest this evening is Arthur Townes.

This evenings meeting commenced at 7:16 PM.

Arthur Townes – Mr. Townes was present this evening to find out if the Town has any interest in adopting conservation measures on a parcel of land, map 403, lots 19 & 21.1, which are currently owned by Arthur's mother, Beverly Townes. Discussion on this topic was varied, such as how much timber could be slicked off the parcel. Local forester, Jeremy Turner has already eyed the parcel for timber evaluation purposes. George interjected that whatever forestry occurs, there must be a management plan in place. Arthur stated he adequately understands, from perusing previous minutes, there is a dearth of financial resources available for open space provisions. However, he went on, he has plans of the property drawn up anyway in the future event the local financial scenario improves. The plans themselves are for a cluster arrangement with the open space land protecting several established fields. Michael Dahlberg is the surveyor. The lots available for open space procurement are 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, and 21.1, a combined total of about 15 acres. Mr. Townes explained there are various options, depending how the lots are configured. Arthur reiterated his main concern at present is to keep open options for his mother and the Town.

Steve contended that in today's market this property can be valued around \$240,000.00 or less, and raw land of this acreage sells for around \$3,500.00/acre. Arthur mentioned that one of his parcels was made an offer of \$165,000.00, but Beverly Townes declined. Arthur claims that when the market once again becomes strong, the parcels will definitely sell. The problem that Steve sees is the value, compared to the amount of land involved, is extraordinarily high at this point in time unless there is a bargain sale, because the land has already been approved as a subdivision. Steve calculation comes to \$80,000.00/lot. Andy asked Mr. Townes if he were proposing any action at this time, to which Mr. Townes answered "definitely not" unless some kind of agricultural grant comes down the pike, then his options will change. Steve suggested Arthur contact Paul Doscher of the Forest Society, about proposing an agricultural grant on the property.

Mr. Townes mentioned his mother Beverly owns another 15 acre lot which is not connected to this parcel under discussion. Andy chimed that in his opinion the main consideration is conserving the field. Arthur concurred with Andy's assessment, however went on to explain that if the fields were cultivated resulting in plowed open soil, it would be undesirable to build houses downwind due to the dust factor. Steve felt that if there were an agricultural easement on the field, then some entity would be required to manage it, and he doubts the Town now has the expertise to handle that situation. In a cluster arrangement, six building lots are permitted to be built. Currently, none of these lots are on the market.

Minutes 8-25-08: The members reviewed the draft minutes of last months meeting, and the following changes were proposed:

- Under the Frank Farmer heading, 5th line down, and strike "...to see if it would be in the Town's best interest...", and change to, "...to see if there is interest in the Town to protect the land".
- Under Frank Farmer, 3rd paragraph, 2nd line, insert "...for residential use" after the word "answered".
- Same heading as above, next to last line, insert the word "maximum" after the word "three".
- Same heading as above, next to last line, insert the word "walk" after the words "A site".

George made motion to approve the minutes as proposed, and Pat 2nd. All voted in favor, with one abstention (Andy), and the motion carries.

Frank Farmer: A fair amount of general discussion focused on what Mr. Farmer can do with his property on River Rd., based on its shape, wetlands, road frontage, slopes, etc. Steve suggested not to encourage Frank to subdivide the parcel for his son's proposed 3 season home as that would increase the purchase price of the land. It was also discussed that a sliver of land along the Piscataquog River is still shown on the map of Mr. Farmer's property as belonging to a Mr. Carr, his neighbor to the west of his land. However, Frank noted that this aberration was never questioned by Mr. Carr, and in reality was always owned by Mr. Farmer.

Pat pointed out this property has great value to the Town considering its river frontage, a swimming hole, an abutting field, and cultural/historical value relating to the old B&M rail corridor. Frank estimates the R.O.W. along the old rail bed on his property to be 5 acres. Frank and his son's main concern at this point in time is to determine if there is any real conservation value in this parcel. They are willing to wait, not for eternity, but a reasonable time span. Pat wondered if there would be any motivation for the Farmer's to donate an easement on this land. Pat suggested notifying the Farmer's that the OSC sees conservation and historical value connected to their land, but doesn't foresee purchasing this property if there's going to be development on it. She has agreed to call Mr. Farmer explaining to him this position.

Hawkes/Wilson Update: Steve spoke with Shawn today and traded e-mails with Eric Masterson, PLS executive director. Once the deeds are written, the title search will be finished, and will then move on to closing. The easement deed has the easement language but also needs spatial description, according to Steve. The Town will have executory interest in the easement. Laura Spector, Town attorney, will need to review it before it becomes legal. There will be a \$10,000.00 monitoring fee in addition to any closing costs to PLC. Andy will meet with the BOS, keeping them informed of the impending closing of this land contact.

Open Space Plan: There is no electronic version available at this time. Andy stated what is needed is a higher quality scan then what is currently being used. Pat has a print copy in PDF which, as Steve explained, is not high quality. The original hard copy has disappeared, according to Andy. Pat said she has a hard copy,

but she's not sure which version. Steve explained if it's the original clean hard copy it can be commercially scanned into a word recognition program, and then it would just need to be cleaned up. Steve pointed out that the copy that is now currently available is owned by SNHPC, but is only a cheap scan, and not exportable to PDF.

Adjournment: George made motion to adjourn, and Pat 2nd. All voted in favor, and this evenings meeting of the WOSC adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Ciampi
Secretary WOSC

Cc: Merry Rice
BOS
OSC Files
Town Clerk